County of Los Angeles
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES
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Acting Director

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August 1, 2006

To: Mayor Michael D. Antonovich
          Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, Chair Pro Tem
          Supervisor Gloria Molina
          Supervisor Yvonne Burke
          Supervisor Don Knabe

From: Joan Smith
          Acting Director

DECEMBER 6, 2005 BOARD AGENDA ITEM #16 RE: MISSING CHILDREN MONTHLY UPDATE

On December 6, 2005, your Board directed the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) to reconvene the Missing Children Task Force in order to continue in the identification and refinement of practices for the prevention and recovery of runaways; and to report back on a monthly basis with status updates on the following:

I.   Existing Countywide and community-specific services and programs, including the support that the DCFS Emergency Response Command Post can provide;

II.   Improved maintenance of the DCFS Missing Children Website;

III.   Enhancement of the DCFS Child Protection Hotline to provide specialized support for runaways;

IV.   Consideration of using the Permanency Partners Program (P-3), and;

V.   Addressing the issues that have been raised by youth who have been or are in care of the Department through corrections and modifications to the Department's policy.

UPDATES

The last Task Force meeting was convened on June 22, 2006. There were 31 attendees and both the Law Enforcement and Youth Concerns Sub-committees gave reports and updates regarding their on-going work. The detail from the work of the sub-committees will be put forth in the body of this report.

As reported in the July 3, 2006, memorandum to the Board, training of all departmental staff involved with Abducted and Runaway Kids site (ARKs) reporting has been completed. Preliminary findings have shown that office liaisons are appropriately interfacing with the court, correctly entering viable data on youth runaways, and noting special circumstances, etc., that may impact P-3 on-going efforts to find permanent placements. The training was also successful in that it has identified liaisons throughout all regional offices thereby ensuring a heightened level of awareness of each office's runaway population.

The Runaway Adolescent Program unit has completed its analysis of 50% of each regional office's runaway population. As stated in prior Board reports we now have quantifiable, baseline information regarding this population and trend information. Those trends are pronounced in the areas of mental health interactions, substance abuse histories and multiple runs. Upon completed analysis we have also been able to see a clearer picture of those runaway youth that have relocated out of our jurisdiction. Additional information will be put forth shortly.

CURRENT STATUS

I.   **Existing County-wide and community-specific services and programs, including the support that the DCFS Emergency Response Command Post can provide:**

As outlined in the July report to the Board, the Department's Emergency Response Command Post maintains its procedures by which to monitor runaway youth. The division also continues to document specific information on that population for use in regionally based Team Decision-Making (TDM) conferences.

II.   **Improved maintenance of the DCFS Missing Children Web site:**

Refinement of the ARKs data base continues via recommendations of the Runaway Task Force and the department's Bureau of Information Services (BIS) division. For example, in the last month we have requested programming efforts that allow for additional, varied ways to sort the data of runaway youth. This capability allows us to look at the population in many different ways and allows for enhanced discussions on ways in which we may best service this population.

The clean up on the ARK's site has been completed. We have successfully removed all outdated information on our runaway population and now monitor daily and maintain the systems integrity via newly trained regional office liaison efforts.

Additionally, BIS remains committed to monitoring the web site for corrupted data. The Bureau also provides technical assistance, which allows the Task Force a realistic, nuanced picture of the Department's Runaway youth.

III.   Enhancement of the DCFS Child Protection Hotline to provide specialized support for runaways:

The Law Enforcement sub committee continues to meet and discuss ideas, which may lead to additional recommendations for the Department. Upon receipt of information on RAP's completed analysis on regional office Runaways, committee members discussed the viability of augmented collaborative efforts across jurisdictions.

RAP's analysis showed a significant number of youth who have AWOL'ed across county and state lines. It further showed, through CSW due diligence, that youth – though still wards of our court – have "settled" in these unauthorized environments. There is substantial information on youth that are living with parents/relatives, residing with domestic partners, attending school and birthing children.

Continued Task Force and Law Enforcement committee discussion around jurisdictional collaborative efforts would begin to address some of the current realities presented by the Runaway population. For example, the Department currently utilizes the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) to relocate children and youth to other jurisdictions, often across state lines. However, we don't currently account for runaway youth that have crossed state lines in this manner. Yet, upon locating a runaway youth in an out-of-state region the Department could potentially explore other options, which include obtaining court sanction for the youth's current placement and collaboratively identified criteria across states. Cases where this could happen and serve the best interest of the youth are those in which our Department has made contact with the jurisdiction's Child Welfare Department. A thorough assessment could be conducted and if it has been determined that the minor is safe and residing in a stable placement, which offers permanency and well being then DCFS could implement use of an ICPC. Further discussion is scheduled to take place regarding this option.

IV.   Consideration of using the Permanency Partners Program (P-3):

As outlined in the March 1, 2006 Board report, all runaways are now referred to P-3 staff. A follow-up report will be made to your Board upon any changes regarding this initiative.

V.   Addressing the issues that have been raised by youth who have been or are in care of the Department through corrections and modifications to the Department's policy.

The Youth Concerns Sub-committee was not able to meet prior to the last Task Force meeting. However, the committee introduced the Torrance regional office staff who presented on their runaway youth focus group meeting. In attendance were committee members of the Youth Concerns Sub-committee along with 40 youth and 10 caregivers. The purpose was to listen to youth as they detailed the reasons for why they run, to whom, and where they run. The youth also provided comprehensive details on how they sustained and protected themselves during AWOL status.

The Department has identified several strategies by which to track repeat runaway information, per the recommendation of the Youth Concerns Sub-committee. Presently we track the population in several ways, via age groupings and number of days AWOL, allowing us the ability to employ varying strategies. In addition, we have solicited the expertise of the Department's Resource Division. Through this operation we are gathering information and forwarding recommendations, which will impact how we contract with caregivers/providers in the future. Reports to the Board on the work of this Bureau will be forthcoming as it develops.

CONCLUSION

DCFS will continue to work through its regional offices, support bureaus and Task Force recommendations to ensure that enhanced efforts are applied to the runaway population. We are confident that the analysis done on this population will assist us with accessing a continuum of services needed to make an effective impact. The Department is greatly committed to effecting a viable permanency outcome designed to produce outcomes consistent with the Department's three goals of safety, permanency and reduced reliance on detentions.

If you have any questions or need further assistance, please contact me, or your staff may contact Helen Berberian, Board Relations Manager at (213) 351-5530.

JS:AS:cm

Attachment

c: Chief Administrative Office
     County Counsel
     Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors

Abducted & Runaway Foster Childrens System (ARKS)
DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ON RUNAWAY CHILDREN SERVICED BY DCFS
July 28, 2006

Category	Totals / Subtotal	Percent	Comments
Runaway DCFS Foster Children as reported in ARKS System	438		
Age			
0-9 years old	0	0%	
10-13 years old	21	5%	
14-17 years old	417	95%	Majority are teenagers 14-17
	438		
Gender			
Female	305	70%	More girls than boys runaway
Male	133	30%	
	438		
Ethnicity			
American Indian	5	1%	
Black	125	29%	
Asian/Pacific Islander	12	3%	
Hispanic/Latino	240	55%	
White	56	13%	
	438		
Placement Type			
Foster Home	199	45%	
Group Home	151	34%	
Relative/Guardian Home	81	18%	
(Not Indicated)	7	2%	
	438		
Location of CSW			
SPA 1 Lancaster	12	3%	
SPA 1 Palmdale	17	4%	
SPA 2 North Hollywood	25	6%	
SPA 2 Santa Clarita	17	4%	
SPA 3 El Monte	2	0%	
SPA 3 Glendora	39	9%	
SPA 3 Pasadena	13	3%	
SPA 3 Pomona	18	4%	
SPA 4 Metro North	38	9%	
SPA 5 West Los Angeles	16	4%	
SPA 6 Century	20	7%	
SPA 6 Compton	23	5%	
SPA 6 Hawthorne	9	2%	
SPA 6 Wateridge	40	9%	
SPA 7 Belvedere	37	8%	
SPA 7 Santa Fe Springs	36	8%	
SPA 8 Lakewood	34	8%	
SPA 8 Torrance	20	5%	
Adoptions	4	1%	
Specialized Programs	18	4%	
(Not Indicated)	0	0%	
	438		